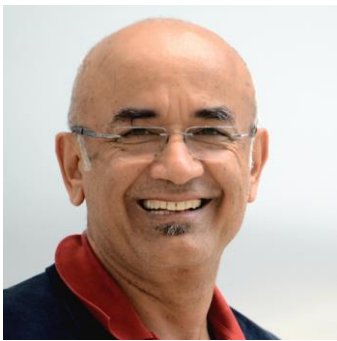


## *Interview*

# ***Ex-Libris Art Promoting Intercultural Dialogue***

Prof. Dr. Hasip Pektaş is interviewed by Prof. Dr. Paul Ade Silva

### **Interviewee: Prof. Dr. Hasip Pektaş**



Prof. Dr. Hasip Pektaş

### **SHORT BIO**

Professor, Graphic, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 2001  
Associate Professor, Graphic, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 1995  
Managed Master's and Doctoral Theses

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**Interviewer: Prof. Dr. Paul Ade Silva**



"I will work with others to make Education a qualitative and affordable right, not a privilege, for all and keep promoting multi-regional centres of excellence... Will continue to advocate as others do for a genuine New World Order based on self-worth of each and every individual and on trans-cultural understanding leading to each person residing at the global centre. Will keep imploring that those who have bound themselves to the consciousness of the 'masses' stop looking for leaders and those who profess the mantle of leadership do away with their crude self-serving framework of global leadership; grow up and understand that every single cell is vitally important even when the degree of its significance is yet to be fully understood or is not understood, at all."  
(<https://www.linkedin.com/in/paul-silva-15481918/>)

**PAS:** Before you introduce us to when and how you first come in contact with Ex-libris Art, tell us your background and journey into becoming an academic and a leader in higher education.

**HP:** I was born in 1953 in Karaman-Ermenek. I graduated from Akşehir as a Primary School Teacher in 1971 and from Gazi Education Institute Art Department in 1974. Between 1987 and 2007, I worked as a faculty member at Hacettepe University Faculty of Fine Arts. I became Associate Professor in 1995 and Professor in 2001. I was the Dean of HU FFA in 2003-2006. In 2005-2007, I served as the Director of Hacettepe Art Museum. I am still the head of Üsküdar University, Faculty of Communication, Cartoon and Animation Department. I am the Founding President of the Istanbul Ex-libris Association and the founding director of Selçuk Ecza Holding Istanbul Ex-libris Museum. More information is available on my website [www.hasippektas.com](http://www.hasippektas.com)

I got to know ex-libris when I saw the samples in the catalog that I received after I participated in the ex-libris competition organized by the Sint-Niklaas Ex-libris Museum in Belgium in 1984. I learned the details through a letter sent by the editor of the competition, Luc Van den Briele. I was interested in it because it was a suitable field for my art education, it gave me the opportunity to use a free language of expression as painting and graphic design, it was new and different for me, and I have devoted myself to this field for the last 37 years. Especially after examining the Belgian Sint-Niklaas Ex-libris Museum and the samples in its collection in 1992. After seeing how far other countries have come in this field, I decided to make an effort to spread this art in our country, Turkey. My biggest dream was to establish an ex-libris association, an ex-libris museum and to organize an international ex-libris competition. It all came true. I am very happy with where we are now. The fact that 25 postgraduate theses have been written on ex-libris (most of which I have been a consultant and source) so far is an indication of the interest in this field. The only thing we feel lacking is that collecting has not become widespread.

**PAS:** Give us some historical backgrounds on the development of Ex-libris Art generally in the world and particularly, in Turkey.

**HP:** Ex-libris is a tradition that started in Central Europe in the 1450s. In a period when there were manuscripts, a label with a picture and the name of the owner of the book was put on the books of statesmen or clergy of the period. This art was born out of necessity. The first ex-libris made on paper, the first real ex-libris was made for the German priest Johannes Knabenberg, whose nickname was "Iglér", in 1450, depicting a hedgehog biting a flower in the meadow and on which the warning "May Hanns Iglér kiss you" is written, also shows the sense of humor of that period. Of course, with the invention of the printing press, this tradition developed and became widespread.

Ex-libris, which became widespread with the proliferation of books since the 16th century, was also made by famous artists. It is known that Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) until the year of 1525, made a twenty-one page ex-libris for Willibald Pirckheimer and Hektor Pömer, the famous statesman and scientist of the time. Albrecht Dürer painted grapes and wine inside the horn, which is a symbol of fertility, in the heraldry he made with woodcut technique for his friend Willibald Pirckheimer. Albrecht Dürer also used the inscription "SIBI ET AMICIS" meaning "for himself and his friends" in this ex-libris of the generous Pirckheimer; so that Pirckheimer's friends could also benefit from these books. The Latin word "LIBER" in front of the name means "Willibald's books". Later, the word Ex Libris was used instead of Liber.

Ex-libris, which differs according to various tendencies and social environment, was made for monasteries, churches, priests, princes, and wealthy families with very important libraries in 17th century Germany. While some book owners stuck these small leaves with their names on their books, some just used them as emblems. Especially a group of book owners in

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Southern Europe had glyphs, signs and emblems called "supra libros" made by pressing on leather-covered book covers.

Ex-libris contained more emblems from its emergence to the first half of the 17th century. From the Middle Ages, weapons, armor, and shields had distinctive markings that allowed the cavalry hidden inside to be recognized even from afar. These weapons and materials were accepted among the cultured people of the library as a sign of ownership or a pennant that more quickly identified the owner of the book. There was no need for an inscription to indicate the person's name. This can be attributed to the reason for the preference for rigging-themed ex-libris at that time.

There were many motifs in ex-libris until the 20th century. emblems were the most used motifs until the 19th century. On top of these, a maxim or password is added alongside the owner's name. In the 15th century ex-libris, the influence of Gothic style writings can be seen. In the 16th century, under the influence of the Renaissance, the surrounding of the emblems was decorated with architectural patterns and frames. In addition, typographic and portrait-oriented ex-libris have also emerged.

The influence of the Baroque period was seen in the 17th century ex-libris. Paintings were made on religious and erotic subjects, descriptions and analogies began to be used more. While only architectural figures were used before, little angel drawings, figures and flowers from nature started to be used with the influence of the Italian style. In addition to the "emblem of nobility", in which the profession of the person giving the order is easily understood, there was also an attitude suitable for the understanding of life.

From the 18th century onwards, nature and interior descriptions were oriented, and these places were sometimes depicted as fantastic items, sometimes as images from the library where the book was located. Some of the ex-libris of this period were decorated with seashells and spiral flower braids in accordance with the artistic understanding of that day.

The existence of books was strengthened with the industrial revolution in the 19th century, and the foundations of scientific, economic development and intellectual change were laid with the invention of fast printing technology. Not only private libraries were developed, but large libraries were also established. An unprecedented number of books began to be produced. With the increase in book printing, simple seals, stamps and ex-libris have begun to be used in a narrower sense, instead of the designs specific to each book and book owner. However, despite everything, different trends and original studies that vary according to the social environment have always been seen.

At the end of the 19th century, there was a new revival in the art of ex-libris, and even mass-oriented studies were carried out. In this period, ex-libris collection was discovered and

became widespread. Antique dealer Heinrich Lempertz from Cologne can be cited as the pioneer of this field. Lempertz published the ex-libris he collected in 1850 in a book called "Illustrated Books on the History of the Book Trade, Arts and Professions". In those years, interest in old German art and the works of the "Heraldic Exlibris" (Heraldic Emblem), which was about to be forgotten, increased again. Ex-libris, which is no longer made with the idea of sticking it on books, but also started to be used as objects of accumulation and exchange, has become independent as an original graphic work, rather than a book-specific sign. Theoretical research on this subject began, books and magazines were published, and associations where collectors gathered were established. The first collectors' association called "Ex-libris Society" was established in London. Ex-libris associations established in Germany in 1891, in France in 1894, in Switzerland and Italy in 1908, and in Belgium in 1918, have provided important developments for ex-libris with their printed books, educational bulletins and documents. Over time, these associations multiplied, they published magazines, address lists, and organized competitions so that their members could exchange ex-libris beyond the borders of the country.

In 1900, many artists turned to new searches and provided the reflection of the styles and approaches of applied arts on ex-libris. These German artists of the new style, also called "Jugendsilkünstler"; Max Klinger (1857-1920), Max Liebermann (1847-1935), Emil Orlik (1870-1932), Franz Marc (1880-1916), Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), Franz von Stuck 1863-1928), Fritz Privates (1868-1940), Julius Diez (1870-1957), Mathilde Ade (1877-1953) and Willi Geiger (1878-1971) may also be added. Important names of painting art also made ex-libris studies. The first ones that come to mind are Edvard Munch (1863-1944), Kaethe Kolwitz (1867-1945), Emil Nolde (1867-1956), Paul Klee (1879-1940), Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), Karl Schmidt - Rottluff (1884) -1976), Oscar Kokoschka (1888-1980) and Frans Masereel (1889-1972).

In the field of ex-libris, museology has also developed over time. Frederikshavn in Denmark, Gutenberg in Germany, Sint Niklaas in Belgium, Moscow in Russia, Mediterraneo in Italy, Shanghai Fuxihanzhai in China, Nancy Library in France, Ex-libris Center in Bulgaria and Odessa Lewych in Ukraine are the most important ex-libris museums. Frederikshavn Ex-libris Museum has more than 1 million collections.

In Turkey, the first ex-libris association was established in 1997. Founded in Ankara as the "Ankara Ex-libris Association", the association has been continuing its activities in Istanbul since 2008 as the Istanbul Ex-libris Association. Our membership number has exceeded 100. Our association has a good website. <http://www.aed.org.tr> You can find all information about ex-libris on this site. The sale of the ex-libris book is also done on the association's website. Also edited by Prof. Dr. Hatice Öz Pektaş, we have an international peer-reviewed online journal named "EXLIBRIST" <http://exlibrist.net> You can find many articles on ex-libris in the magazine.



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Our association organized 4 international ex-libris competitions in 2003, 2007, 2010 and 2018 with the support of institutions and individuals. Organized the 33rd FISAE International Ex-libris Congress in 2010. The competition exhibitions toured Turkey's 15 big cities, and served as a kind of school especially for students studying art. In this way, the number of those who love exlibris has increased. Turkey's participation in the CGD (Computer Aided Design) ex-libris competitions held in Belgium in 2005 and 2007 was close to 50%. Turkey won the first prize in both competitions. In the "Student Ex-libris Competition" held in Russia, Turkey received the first prize in the CGD branch three times in a row.

Museums are cultural institutions that transfer their values to future generations. The mission of modern museology is to educate society and ensure its social and cultural development. As an association, we have made an effort on museums that fuel curiosity and contribute to social development. Although it took a great trouble, we finally got a permanent ex-libris museum. I had two misfortunes regarding the ex-libris museum. The first museum was opened in 2008 by the founder of the IMOGA Graphic Arts Museum, Prof. Dr. Süleyman Saim Tekcan. We established it at IMOGA with his patronage. But then we were removed from there for an unknown reason. The ex-libris collection has been waiting in my office for years. Then, with the support of my two art-related rectors, we tried to establish it at Işık University. prof. Dr. Nafiye Güneç Kıyak and Prof. Dr. Şirin Tekinay gave serious support in this regard. But they resigned from their duties before they could gain the official museum ID, which was approved by the Ministry of Culture. However, we wanted it to be approved by the Ministry of Culture, just like the Hacettepe Art Museum I established at Hacettepe University. But the administration at that time remained indifferent. And they dropped me out of the university for a reason I don't understand. We did not know what the future of this collection, which belongs to the association, would be, so we took it out of the university. Unfortunately, the university just took me to court.

They want the ex-libris back. However, this collection was put there on the condition that it will be a museum approved by the Ministry of Culture. I do not know when the court will conclude, but two years ago, we established the Istanbul Ex-libris Museum in Altunizade, Istanbul, under the auspices of art-loving Selçuk Ecza Holding. Last year, we got the approval of the Ministry of Culture. We will make a grand opening at the end of the pandemic process. This was my biggest goal. The Istanbul Ex-libris Museum has been added as the tenth among the nine Ex-libris Museums in the world.



A section from the Istanbul Ex-libris Museum

**PAS:** What are the characteristics and functions of the Ex-libris Art form and how is it different from or like other art forms? Discuss Ex-libris Art in terms of graphic art.

**HP:** No designer is completely free when producing. First of all, they have the concern of influencing and persuading their target audience. They have limitations. When promoting a product or service, they should be clear and use correct expressions. While doing these, of course, they will have aesthetic concerns; but it is a must that it be perceived, understood, and put into action. The optional work of the designer does not prevent them from creating creative products. But they don't have the luxury of saying "I did it, it's okay even if you don't understand" or "make a little effort and understand". The person who designs the ex-libris is completely free in the design process or in the form of expression but has to consider the wishes of the orderer in the selection of the subject. This also imposes a restriction. But if it's not done with aesthetic concerns, it has no chance to stay in the future.

Ex-libris are small-sized original prints on which their names and pictures on various subjects are pasted by book lovers on the inside cover of their books. The book introduces the owner, glorifies them, and warns the borrower to return the book. Ex-libris is usually made in line with the interest of the person on whose behalf the ex-libris is made. Just as people hang the picture they like on their wall; they paste an ex-libris on the subject of their interest in their book. Ex-libris is made with aesthetic concerns. All the possibilities of art are also used in these small works. Anyone can make ex-libris for themselves, but the ones made by those who have received art education have a high chance of staying in the future.

Ex-libris carries several functions. Its main function is to describe the owner of the book and warn the borrower to return it. It is a kind of property sign. Another function is its use as an important object of exchange between artists and collectors. And of course, its third function is to enrich our souls as a work of art. No matter what period you look at or what function you talk about, ex-libris has given its owner a privilege, a power, and an influence. People who



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have ex-libris in their books were happy to have a special work designed for them, and they saw themselves as privileged from other book collectors. Those who have an ex-libris collection, on the other hand, showed their wealth with these artifacts, which have cultural and historical characteristics of the period they were made, and increased their prestige by sharing them.

Its difference from other art forms is that it is small in size and must be reproduced. Since it will be pasted on the book, the picture area should not be larger than 13 cm and should be reproduced and numbered just like in the printmaking tradition so that it can be pasted on different books. Replication is of course also necessary to be able to exchange. In addition to traditional printing techniques such as engraving, wood printing, linoleum printing, lithography, screen printing, offset, photography and computer are used to reproduce ex-libris. Technical and aesthetic competence are indispensable requirements for a design. However, it is not enough for the designer to be technically proficient, the essential thing is to develop their aesthetic taste and to attain the competence to ensure color and form harmony. In case of insufficiency of one, ex-libris cannot stay for the future. Opportunities provided by technical diversity can provide a richness and originality opportunity in artistic expression.



Hasip Pektaş, C3+C4, (10x8), 1995



Hasip Pektaş, CGD, (11x8), 2004

**PAS:** Discuss how Ex-libris transformed from being bookplate to art.

**HP:** Ex-libris are made to order on behalf of the living person or institution and reflect their characteristics. When the creation process is examined, it is seen that all the possibilities of the art of painting are used. Looking at its functional side, it can be considered as a graphic design product.

Whatever technique is used, the ex-libris is designed with artistic concerns. Its survival into the future depends on its color and form relationship, its originality, technical and aesthetic competence, and harmony in painting and writing. In these small designs, adding the word ex-libris and the owner's name is a design problem in itself. If the text used is not in the right place and in the appropriate size, it will be disturbing and affect the ex-libris negatively. Therefore, it is necessary to try hard, to place the text after finding the appropriate area. The text should neither be too small to be read nor large enough to steal a role.

Artists or designers make ex-libris either by order or as a gift to the person they see fit. If it is made by order, detailed information is obtained, and alternative drafts are created in line with this information. The favorite draft is put into practice and reproduced in a certain number with the desired technique. In ex-libris made from order, the design is realized after good observation and research. In any case, the taste of the ex-libris owner must be taken into account. The code of the technique, the number of editions (like 2/50. The number on the left shows the number of editions, the number on the right shows how many copies were printed), the name or signature of the artist and the year of production should be written in pencil under the duplicated ex-libris. Knowing the number of prints makes ex-libris valuable. Photocopies, drawings, and drafts are not accepted as ex-libris.

**PAS:** Explain the connection between eroticism and Ex-libris art.

**HP:** Erotic is used for anything related to liking the opposite sex. Erotic, with another definition; means the power that the loved "object" has over the lover.

Throughout history, artists have used erotic images as a way of expressing the contrasts that form the basis of life, in short, the individual and the universe, woman and man, soul and existence, light and darkness, life and death. Some artists have used eroticism to illustrate human behavior.

Erotic art tells how the artist sees the universe, love, and passion, and how they react to human behavior. Erotic paintings represent a lost period in our history as the subject of jokes and banter for a long time. Today, many still believe that sex is a very private subject in books. On one hand, eroticism is a valuable link between humanity and holiness. Every erotic picture is a challenge. The keyhole is not enough to spy, it is necessary to open doors, share

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experiences. Today, as in many other branches of art, the art of ex-libris, with its diversity in subject and reproduction techniques, gives countless artists the opportunity to express themselves freely.

It is also known that ex-libris with special themes were ordered for erotic books. Often, such an indication is not required, although some book owners' names are prefixed with "ex eroticis".

Erotic ex-libris is easily recognized; The illustration is created on an exotic element, which often implies people's feelings, stimulates men and women, describes quite different erotic excitements and sexual pleasures. Perhaps that is why it is the most requested ex-libris subject by collectors.

Erotic book collectors are keen on beautiful erotic illustrations. An erotic ex-libris placed in an erotic book or such collection gives it a little more personality.

Eroticism begins with the female form. A beautiful reclining female body is enough for a first touch and a desire to approach. It is always possible to see the reflections of the interest in eroticism on exlibris.

**PAS:** What major insights can you share with us on the cultural heritage and development of the art of bookplates in the late twentieth century to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

**HP:** As in all works of art, it is possible to see cultural and historical features of the period in which they were made. Ex-libris was originally designed for a functional purpose, but over time it fulfilled different functions. Ex-libris has turned into an art type with its own principles, rules, and techniques in the 21st century. Ex-libris are not only stuck on books as a sign of ownership, but they have become objects that are meticulously collected by their enthusiasts, used as objects of exchange, and of course, enriching our lives as a work of art. Its small size does not cause low interest. Rather, they are art objects that can be purchased more easily. They are numbered original printmaking works.

**PAS:** Are there national differences in the production and practices of the Ex-libris Art, for example if we were to compare the Ex-libris art originating in Turkey to that coming from Ukraine, Slovenia, Lithuania, Russia or Italy or Holland, would we be confronted with major differences in styles and topics or are they all similar in style and scope?

**HP:** There are national differences in ex-libris design and applications. Because it is natural for the designer to reflect the culture he lives in and to choose his subjects from his own culture. While a Turkish ex-libris artist will successfully reflect the subject of Karagöz Hacivat, a Finnish artist will of course successfully design the subject about Vikings. The success of

the ex-libris is directly proportional to the competence of the artist. An artist with a good art education makes more successful designs than an amateur. For example, the fact that there are very famous ex-libris artists in Russia, Bulgaria and Ukraine is because they received a serious education in drawing and art. The high interest in art also increases the demand and feeds the artist. The ex-libris made by a person who knows the ex-libris culture well, sees many examples, designs a lot, and has experience in typography is, of course, different from that of beginners, it is sought after. In addition, in countries that have had this culture long ago, for example, in the country of children who grew up seeing it in their family's library, there is a greater interest in ex-libris. Especially if the interest in the book is high, the interest in the ex-libris will also be high.

Master artists do not imitate someone else's style. They shouldn't. Their future depends on the originality of their designs and their technical competence. Being preferred by collectors and getting lots of orders depends on the success of the artist.

It is not enough for ex-libris to become widespread in our country and to be taught as a course in 6 universities today. Just like European countries, like Russia, Japan, it is very important to train master artists who do this job as a profession and to make quality ex-libris. Our shortcoming is that there are few of our artists who are sought after with their original works.

**PAS:** In what ways does Ex-libris art promote intercultural dialogue?

**HP:** I think no work of art is as convenient to exchange and share as ex-libris. You can easily send some of the extra ex-libris you have to another artist or collector whose works you like, by mail, and create an opportunity for them to get to know you and you to get to know them. This communication can also bring new friendships and companionships. You can get to know the art style, artist, and technical richness of that country with the ex-libris you receive from an artist of another country. The subject that the ex-libris bears can provide you with information about the person on whose behalf the ex-libris was made.

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